

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 08 TEL AVIV 000499

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO  
E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

-----  
SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
-----

- [1](#)1. Mideast
- [1](#)2. Iran: Nuclear Program
- [1](#)3. Iraq

-----  
Key stories in the media:  
-----

Israel Radio reported that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will leave next week for a tour of Europe and the Middle East, which will include nine countries and the PA. (According to Jerusalem Post, Secretary Rice will start her trip early next month.)

SIPDIS

The radio quoted. Deputy A/S David Satterfield as saying that Israel must cease settlement activities in the territories because they impede application of the principle of two states for two peoples. He expressed satisfaction with the actions of PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), but explained that there is no room for flexibility, and Abbas must confront all those who wish to continue on the path of terrorism. All media reported that outgoing A/S William Burns held separate meetings with PM Sharon and Abbas on Thursday. (Ha'aretz reported that Burns has been appointed U.S. ambassador to Moscow.) Ha'aretz wrote that Burns told Sharon that the Bush administration has been favorably impressed by Abbas and by the measures undertaken by Israel to facilitate the elections in the territories. Ha'aretz reported that Shin Bet head Avi Dichter met with National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley on Thursday in Washington, and updated him on the steps taken by the PA to curb terrorism, and the role of Hizbullah in fostering militant activities in the territories. Ha'aretz reported that senior U.S. administration officials have told their Israeli counterparts that Abbas is the "best man in the foreseeable future and he must be given a chance." The U.S. officials reportedly also asked that Israel "give time" to Abbas in order for him to gradually deal with terrorism, without ignoring the responsibility of the Palestinians to combat terrorism. Ha'aretz reported that the new Bush administration is organizing for dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian file: it includes Secretary Rice, NSA Hadley, Elliott Abrams, a White

SIPDIS

House official who will be moved up to the number three spot in the NSC, and current U.S. Ambassador to Egypt David Walsh, who will move to head the Middle East section.

All media (lead story in Ha'aretz) quoted Sharon as saying Thursday that "the conditions have been created that will enable us and the Palestinians to reach a historic breakthrough in our relations." Sharon further said, "It is apparent that there is a positive approach [in the PA] to the fight against terrorism and to the furthering of the diplomatic process. Yediot reported that Abbas has suggested that Israel and the PA jointly declare a cease-fire.

In an interview conducted in Krakow on Thursday with Jerusalem Post, Russian President Vladimir Putin refused to rule out his country's sale of anti-aircraft missiles to Syria, insisting that such weapons serve "defensive" purposes only and would not affect the balance of forces in the region.

Leading media reported that citing in crime and

lawlessness in PA-controlled areas, the PA on Thursday issued an order banning Palestinians from carrying "unlicensed" weapons. Israel Radio reported that Hamas was the big winner in the PA's municipal elections.

All media extensively reported on the ceremony marking the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau. A headline on Yediot's front page: "60 Years Too Late: The World Bows Its Head at Auschwitz." President Moshe Katsav said that a Jewish state was the answer to the Holocaust. Jerusalem Post notes that Putin's failure to mention Jews in his speech upset Israeli officials. Leading media quoted Vice President Dick Cheney as saying: "The story of the camp reminds us that evil is real, must be called by its name and must be confronted."

Yediot reported that from this week, all arrests in the territories must be approved by the Shin Bet head or his deputy, and that in each case it must be a wanted person about to carry out a terrorist attack. The number of arrests has already decreased by 40 percent. The newspaper quotes Israeli defense sources as saying that the new policy is meant to encourage the Palestinians to cooperate in the thwarting of attacks.

Ha'aretz reported that the organization Breaking the Silence has collected new testimony from IDF soldiers on harsh actions carried out during the course of the fighting in the territories. Two of the testimonies pertain to a military doctor who gave medics lessons in anatomy using the bodies of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces. Yediot reported that in his annual report, John Dougard, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories, wrote that Israel's demolition of homes in the territories constitutes a war crime.

Leading media reported that IDF soldiers killed an unarmed Palestinian civilian at the Netzarim Junction in the Gaza Strip on Thursday, and that another Palestinian, a security prisoner held by Israel, died Thursday in a fire that broke out at the IDF prison at Megiddo. The media reported on clashes and rocket launchings in the Gaza Strip.

Leading media reported that the Foreign Ministry has been making a diplomatic effort in recent weeks to convince the EU to include Hizbullah on its list of terrorist organizations. Israeli representatives are highlighting the threat Hizbullah poses to Abbas.

Jerusalem Post cited the Interior Ministry as saying Thursday it will appoint accountants to review the books of nine local authorities in the West Bank accused of illegally contributing to the settlers' campaign to derail the government's disengagement plan.

Leading media reported that Egypt and Jordan are shaping a joint peace plan modeled after the "Saudi initiative." Yediot reported that Egypt has decided to establish an embassy in Ramallah.

Leading media reported that the Jewish National Fund (JNF) and the Finance Ministry are currently trying to draft a new agreement that would separate the JNF from the state, thereby allowing it to continue selling land to Jews only. Maariv reported that right-wing Knesset members have called for the dismissal of A-G Menachem Mazuz over his decision to allow sales of state land to Arabs.

Leading media reported that on Thursday, Tourism Minister Abraham Hirschson and his Palestinian counterpart, Mitri Abu Eita, signed a joint letter requesting a meeting with Pope John Paul II to discuss promoting Christian tourism to Israel and the PA.

Jerusalem Post quoted Massachusetts Congressman Michael Capuano (D) as saying that city councils across the U.S. are vulnerable to being manipulated and adopting divest-from-Israel petitions.

Maariv reported that the families of three IDF soldiers who were killed during the Intifada intend to sue the Arab Bank's branch in New York City for receiving large sums from terror groups posing as Islamic charity organizations. The newspaper quoted Mark Werbner, lead legal counsel for the prosecution, as saying that U.S. law "allows us to sue in the name of soldiers who were murdered during their service." Maariv reported that two Israelis who were wounded in the suicide bombing at Tel Aviv's Doplhinarium discotheque three and a half years ago are suing the PA at the Tel Aviv District Court for 40 million shekels (around USD 9 million). The plaintiffs claim that evidence that the bomber

received financial assistance from the PA was discovered during the IDF's 2002 Defensive Shield operation in Jenin.

Ha'aretz, Jerusalem Post and Israel Radio reported that U/S of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith announced on Wednesday that he intends to resign for personal reasons. The media recall that Feith has been one of Israel's closest allies in Washington, but that he has been behind the crisis between the two countries over the supply of Israeli-made UAVs to China.

Jerusalem Post reported that Israeli pianist Daniel Barenboim compared Zionism founder Theodor Herzl to Richard Wagner and Israeli soldiers to Nazis during a lecture this week on "Wagner, Israel and Palestine" at Columbia University.

A Maariv/Teleseker poll:

- "Against the background of the quiet in the Gaza Strip, what should Israeli do in case an easy opportunity to eliminate terrorist leaders presents itself?" Exercise restraint: 62 percent. Eliminate them: 35 percent.

- "What do you believe should be done with the houses in the settlements after the evacuation?" They should be demolished: 55 percent. They should be handed over to the Palestinians: 37 percent.

Yediot cited the results of a poll conducted by the German newsmagazine Der Stern: 74 percent of Germans claim that the Germans should not feel shame over what happened in the Nazi death camps.

-----  
**I. Mideast:**  
-----

Summary:  
-----

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "Given the current fragile situation ... the U.S. Secretary of State ought to exploit the momentum that

SIPDIS has been created and provide immediate assistance, thereby injecting a little more goodwill and motivation into both sides."

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "Abu Mazen will apparently succeed in reaching a cease-fire. The situation on the ground will calm down."

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in Ha'aretz: "[Sharon] has all the public support he needs to crush this unholy alliance between the Land of Israel zealots and Hizbullah, who are working in the name of God and Allah to destroy the State of Israel." Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in Ha'aretz: "Israel will ... discover that what it has done recently in East Jerusalem is contrary to the road map it adopted.... This is not the way to begin negotiations for peace."

Block Quotes:  
-----

**I. "Stop Shooting"**

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (January 28): "The sense that each individual soldier in the field could end the partial lull between the Palestinian Authority and Israel -- a lull that has created a positive atmosphere between the parties and enabled talks aimed at arranging a meeting between Ariel Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) -- is no illusion. Regrettably, it seems that uncontrolled outbursts of shooting are not confined to the Palestinian side.... Upon Condoleezza Rice's assumption of her new job as U.S. secretary of state, she announced that she would become personally involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and even agreed to consider American involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian mechanism that will resolve disputes between the parties during implementation of the disengagement plan. Given the current fragile situation, in which the cease-fire could be shattered by loss of control, military caprice, or insufficient coordination between the sides, the U.S. Secretary of State ought to exploit the momentum that has been created and provide immediate assistance, thereby injecting a little more goodwill and motivation into both sides."

**II. "The Good Bang"**

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (January 28): "Arafat has gone; the U.S. and France are joint applying heavy pressure on Syria to curb terror; Egypt is acting in favor of the [disengagement] move; the Palestinians are exhausted and hope for something else; and Ariel Sharon is ripe for big moves. Everything is flowing in desirable directions. Bush is serious, so are Sharon and Abu Mazen; [Egyptian intelligence chief] Omar Suleiman is very serious. By the way, an official agreement will soon be signed between Israel and Egypt, including an exact definition of the Egyptian terror-fighting task force, which will provide protection at Israel's southern border. A new galaxy has been forming before our very eyes.... There is a reasonable chance that the worst is behind us (giving way to a different sort of unpleasantness: an accelerated road map with the cessation of terrorist attacks, but without the crushing of terror). Abu Mazen will apparently succeed in reaching a cease-fire. The situation on the ground will calm down."

### III. "An Unholy Alliance"

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in Ha'aretz (January 28): "Every morning we open our eyes and can't believe it. Is this for real? Another day without mortars, rockets, and suicide bombings? It makes us want to stretch out in bed and heave a sigh of relief at the thought that we're on the verge of a turning point in our relations with the Palestinians. Only we're not sure that it's really happening or that it will last.... [Mahmoud Abbas] has not only silenced the guns, but also managed to rein in Sharon and stop the gunfire on this side.... Sharon has embarked on a historical move, and he is more determined than ever to complete it. He has all the public support he needs to crush this unholy alliance between the Land of Israel zealots and Hizbullah, who are working in the name of God and Allah to destroy the State of Israel."

### IV. "A Property Theft That Must Not Be Allowed"

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in Ha'aretz (January 28): "The government's decision from July 2004 to confiscate lands and infrastructures in East Jerusalem that belong to Palestinians who live in the West Bank is odd, to say the least.... Israel will ... discover that what it has done recently in East Jerusalem is contrary to the road map it adopted. The map's first phase explicitly states that the government of Israel will not confiscate property and houses that belong to Palestinians. It is worth reminding the government ministers that the first phase of the road map contains an Israeli commitment to reopen the Palestinian institutions and their chamber of commerce in East Jerusalem. All of this is in direct contradiction to what Sharon's government did in July 2004, in the matter of the Palestinian property in East Jerusalem. This is not the way to begin negotiations for peace."

## 12. Iran: Nuclear Program:

### Summary:

Editorial Page Editor Saul Singer wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "If Europe and the U.S. together side with the people in the streets against the thieves of their government, the mullahs will not be able to retain power."

### Block Quotes:

"What the Realists Don't Realize"  
Editorial Page Editor Saul Singer wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (January 28): "What the realists don't realize is that if there is a problem with Bush's [inaugural] speech, it is neither utopianism nor excess ambition. If anything, Bush has made the goal of securing the world seem more daunting than it really is.... It is ridiculous to assert that the Iranian regime is stable or permanent. In a month, a year, or a decade, it will collapse under its own weight, with much help from the Iranian people.... How long this takes is determined less by the ample bravery and desire for freedom of the Iranian people, than by the entirely optional hypocrisy of the West.... If Europe and the U.S. together side with the people in the streets against the thieves of their government, the mullahs will not be able to retain power.... It is absurd to argue that it makes no difference which finger is on the nuclear button, the mullahs or their much more democratic, pro-Western successors. The best

would be neither, but the latter is vastly preferable. Realists should get this: unless they have an idea how to stop the coming Islamist nuke, they have nothing to offer."

-----  
13. Iraq:  
-----

Summary:  
-----

Defense and foreign affairs columnist Amir Oren wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "On the way to achieving [their] goals, the Americans and those being aided by them are sustaining daily tactical losses, but not a strategic defeat, because Bush and Rumsfeld have remained in office and their determination to persist with their policy has not slackened."

Block Quotes:  
-----

"Iraq Is Not Vietnam"

Defense and foreign affairs columnist Amir Oren wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (January 28): "In the Americans' profit-and-loss balance sheet in Iraq, the price -- reported every day -- is threatening to blur the achievement that is being accumulated from a broader angles. It is an expensive, protracted, bleeding intervention, but all in all worthwhile, better than the realistic alternative. Contrary to the nonsense sometimes voiced, Iraq is not Vietnam.... On the way to achieving [their] goals, the Americans and those being aided by them are sustaining daily tactical losses, but not a strategic defeat, because Bush and Rumsfeld have remained in office and their determination to persist with their policy has not slackened."

KURTZER